

**County Council**

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**LGR Update**



---

**Report of George Garlick, Chief Executive  
(Cabinet Portfolio Holder Councillor Simon Henig , Leader)**

---

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the LGR programme.

**Current Position**

2. Although progress slowed over the Christmas period the pace has quickly picked up and good progress continues to be made across the programme.
3. The consultation on the next level of managerial appointments began last week and is to close on 6<sup>th</sup> February. The policy development work is continuing with further policies on Housing and Waste Management coming forward for Members to consider. The budget is also close to agreement and was considered by Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> January. Cabinet has also agreed the final geography, functionality and membership of the 14 Area Action Partnerships. Work is now progressing to have these in place for vesting Day.

**Senior Management Structure**

4. Members will be aware that not all the Heads of Service posts were filled. Interviews have taken place for some of these posts from the pool of internal candidates who had decided not to apply for these posts initially.
5. Even allowing for these additional applicants a number of the posts will need to be filled through an external recruitment exercise and this is to be undertaken early in February once the results of the second round of interviewing is concluded.
6. Temporary arrangements are also being developed to fill the gaps until suitable candidates are found which will ensure service priorities are not put at risk.

## **HR**

7. As mentioned early the consultation on the managers who will report to the Heads of Service is currently underway. Over 100 jobs are included in this level. Once the consultation has closed and the feedback analysed, the recruitment process can begin for those jobs where existing managers aren't 'slotted in'. Interviews will take place towards the end of March involving internal candidates ring fenced based on their current role and responsibilities.
8. Alongside the consultation, invitations have been requested from staff interested in exploring ER/VR arrangements. At this stage no definite decision on applications can be made, as the recruitment process will need to be concluded. External career transition support remains available to all staff affected by the reorganisation.
9. In support of this HR are developing an 'induction' booklet and DVD which will be given to all staff on Vesting Day. This will provide useful information on the new organisation and it is hoped include messages from the Leader and Chief Executive, welcoming staff to the new organisation.
10. Finally the Members Learning and Development Strategy is also nearing completion and will be brought before Members shortly. This covers a wide range of topics including the three key areas of housing, planning and licensing, all mandatory for members sitting on regulatory committees.
11. The Licensing training commenced on the 21st January; the Planning training is planned for 9th February, whilst the Housing training should be delivered later in February or early March.
12. The Members Learning and Development Strategy also incorporates the Councillor Compact and is an integral part of the Investors in People and North East Charter for Member Development accreditation.

## **Area Action Partnerships (AAP)**

13. The development work for this critical deliverable for Vesting Day is now complete and has been agreed by Members. This includes the final geography for the 14 Area Action Partnerships, the membership, functionality and operating model. The outcomes of this work remains closely aligned to the original bid including the financial commitment of £250,000 for each AAP (subject to final budget sign-off).

## **Constitution Working Group**

14. Work on the new Constitution is nearly complete and Members are this month discussing delegations, the Code of Corporate Governance and Member and Officer Protocols. The final Constitution will be agreed by Members at the first Council meeting of the new Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

### **'Must haves'**

15. Since the Christmas holiday's good progress has been made on our 'must haves' (the critical day one projects) and a third have been completed. Although this still leaves the majority to be completed in February and March none of the outstanding projects have been identified as at risk of not being completed although some have revised their deliverables to implement a temporary solution pending a more robust long term solution being introduced after Vesting Day.

## **Members Seminar**

16. The latest seminar provided Members with information on the Housing policies concerning Homelessness and Financial Assistance for homeowners. In early March it is planned to hold a seminar which will take Members through all of key arrangements which will be in place on Vesting Day to ensure service delivery remains unaffected by the reorganisation.

## **LGR Programme Priorities**

17. The three new Executive Directors who were appointed from other Councils have all now started and with their new Heads of Service are developing detailed transitional plans to manage the period up to and immediately after Vesting Day. These plans include interim management arrangements, senior management presence in key locations, communication, training and priorities. Visits are also being made by the Chief Executive to each District office to talk to staff and answer any questions in the run up to Vesting Day. The new Directors and Heads of Service will also be carrying out visits as well as briefing sessions for County Council staff.

18. Key priorities include:

- Budget agreement
- Concessionary pricing
- Harmonisation of service standards
- Fixed penalty notices/finalised list of priority fees and charges
- Corporate enforcement
- Review of policy framework
- Constitution

19. CLG have confirmed that they will be spending the day in Durham on 6<sup>th</sup> February to undertake a 'stock take' of the LGR programme to review the progress being made. In particular they will be reviewing the programme management and governance arrangements, progress on Housing, Planning and Local Engagement and the financial business case including savings.

20. Work has also begun on establishing the longer term improvement programme which will build on the changes introduced in creating the new Council and deliver the transformational change over the next few years necessary to deliver the aspirations of the blueprint and original bid.

### **Communications**

21. In the run up to Vesting Day communication will increase both with staff and externally to stakeholders and citizens. The existing County Council logo will be revised to improve its accessibility and to modernise its look and feel. This will be introduced in a phased way before and after Vesting Day to ensure costs are kept down.

22. To support the communication programme in the run up to Vesting Day a tag line has been created '*altogether better*' which will feature on all communication and marketing material.

### **Recommendations**

23. County Council are asked to note the contents of this report.

---

**Contact: Roger Goodes Tel: 0191 383 5714**

---